

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

September 14, 2009

Findings

- Unhealthy behavior is a major driver of increasing healthcare costs.
- There are multiple public, nonprofit, and private efforts to change unhealthy behaviors in Utah and to increase health and wellness, however, the efforts are fragmented.
- There is a need for better data to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of programs targeted to decrease unhealthy behavior.
- Utah needs to focus on creating a culture of healthy behaviors in the home, schools, workplace, and community, rather than just changing unhealthy behaviors.
- Health and wellness programs should focus on the entire population, keeping the healthy people healthy, as well as changing the behaviors of high risk individuals who do not practice healthy behaviors.
- Health and wellness programs need to be culturally competent and include Spanish and other languages spoken in Utah.

Goal

To build on the synergy of the various health and wellness efforts in Utah. Specifically, to:

- coordinate various public and private programs so that they complement and build on each other's successes;
- include personal responsibility and accountability as a starting point for a culture of health ... it begins with each of us;
- create a culture of healthy behaviors in the home, schools, workplace, and communities;
- create a healthier population; and
- lower the demand for medical care related to unhealthy lifestyles.

Policy Recommendations

1. Create a social effort and cultural change that encourages a healthy lifestyle and healthy choices. Start this process by increasing the availability of and participation in wellness programs in Utah. Some examples of actions to accomplish this goal include:
 - encourage insurers to more aggressively adopt health and wellness incentives in their insurance benefits, premiums, and cost sharing to the full extent permitted by federal law;
 - use the state's insurance exchange to enable consumers and employers to see and compare the different insurance companies' health and wellness programs;
 - use the state's insurance exchange to provide information about public health and wellness programs to individuals who do not have access to employer or insurer wellness programs; and
 - encourage the development of employer wellness programs.

One idea to create greater awareness of the value of employer wellness programs is to use the State Capitol Complex and the State as an employer as an example (with media coverage of the efforts as a bully pulpit for employer wellness programs). Efforts could include healthier choices of food on the State Capitol Complex in both the cafeteria and vending machines, with unhealthy choices subsidizing healthier choices. Additionally, encouraging employee use of the gym and weight loss programs, including efforts by legislators and others to increase physical activity.

Another idea is to test the effectiveness of insurer incentives through PEHP. PEHP should use all tools it can to keep the healthy engaged in healthy choices and healthy behaviors and change unhealthy behavior and choices. PEHP should consider using the maximum premium differentials for reaching health goals that are allowed by federal law.

2. Gather data on programs that successfully increase healthy behaviors in order to identify effective mechanisms that encourage healthy behavior. (Health Department)
3. Children should be a major focus of our efforts because keeping healthy individuals well may be more effective than changing the behavior of the unhealthy. Healthy food choices in the schools should be a priority and the availability of unhealthy food choices should be limited. Opportunities for greater physical activity in schools should be facilitated. Programs should include outreach to parents in order to influence the choices children make regarding food and physical activity in the home and outside the home.